

University of Groningen

Regional Capitals in the Netherlands

Van Steen, Paul J. M.; Pellenbarg, Piet H.; Groote, Peter D.

Published in:
Journal of Economic and Social Geography

DOI:
[10.1111/tesg.12210](https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12210)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Van Steen, P. J. M., Pellenbarg, P. H., & Groote, P. D. (2016). Regional Capitals in the Netherlands. *Journal of Economic and Social Geography*, 107(3), 386-388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12210>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS

REGIONAL CAPITALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

PAUL J.M. VAN STEEN, PIET H. PELLENBARG & PETER D. GROOTE

Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, P.O. Box 800, 9700 AV, Groningen, The Netherlands. E-mails: p.j.m.van.steen@rug.nl; p.h.pellenbarg@rug.nl & p.d.groote@rug.nl

INTRODUCTION: REGIONAL CAPITALS

Following our reflection on the population size, population growth and economic performance of the largest Dutch cities in the first two issues of this year's series of *The Netherlands in Maps*, our third map investigates the degree to which Dutch cities perform important functions for their hinterlands. In other words: which cities in the Netherlands are recognisable as regional capitals?

This question is easier raised than answered. To begin, the term 'regional capital' is not a well-defined urban concept. Reflecting on the growth and performance of a number of 'regional capitals' in Europe, Kooij and Pellenbarg (1994) conclude that regional capitals are towns with more than 100,000 but less than 700,000 inhabitants, that dominate their hinterlands (but simultaneously depend on cities higher in the urban hierarchy for upper-level urban functions), with an urban economy with a high share of non-commercial services, often being the centre of regional administration, and possessing a number of well-developed transport infrastructures.

For our third map, we have selected five variables to see to what degree Dutch cities function as 'capitals' in or for their regions:

- employment: number of jobs per 1,000 residents;
- administrative centre: is the city the capital of one of the 12 provinces?;
- higher education: does the city include one or more of the 14 Dutch research universities?;
- justice: does the city include the headquarters of one of the 11 courts of justice?; and
- culture/leisure: is the city home to one of the 18 premier league ('Eredivisie') football clubs (in season 2015/2016)?

We first selected the municipalities with a population number of 100,000 or more (see Van Steen *et al.* 2016). From this group of 31 municipalities,

we focused on 16 municipalities where the number of jobs per 1,000 residents (in 2014) is at least 25 per cent above the national average of 449 jobs (i.e. 561 jobs per 1,000 residents). These are, in other words, the cities that are the centre of the local and regional job market. Next, for the other four variables, we simply noted if the condition applies (the specific quadrant is then coloured black in the accompanying map) or not (the specific quadrant remains white).

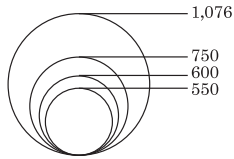
DUTCH REGIONAL CAPITALS

The results of our exercise to identify regional capitals in the Netherlands might come as a surprise. Only two cities qualify on all five criteria: the cities of Utrecht (765 jobs per 1,000 residents) and Groningen (650) are also the capital towns of their provinces, and include a research university, the principle seat of justice for their region, and a football club performing in the top league of Dutch football. Interestingly enough, the provinces that these two cities govern have been named after these cities. This is not the case for any of the other provinces of the Netherlands.

On the other end, the map shows four municipalities that are only included in the map because they meet only one of the five applied conditions for municipalities with at least 100,000 residents: they function as a job centre for their region. The prime example is Haarlemmermeer, the municipality that includes Amsterdam Schiphol Airport as well as the town of Hoofddorp. This municipality contains a large number of jobs for many people living elsewhere. As a result, the number of jobs per 1,000 residents is the highest in the country: 1,076. As already noted in our earlier text (Van Steen *et al.* 2016), 'Haarlemmermeer' is not to be interpreted as a city, as the largest town containing only about half of the municipality's population is named differently. The term 'regional

THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS
 Cities in the Netherlands (Part 3)
REGIONAL CAPITALS

Number of jobs per 1,000 residents
 for municipalities with >100,000 residents
 and number of jobs per 1,000 residents
 at least 25% higher than national average, 2015
 (national average =449)



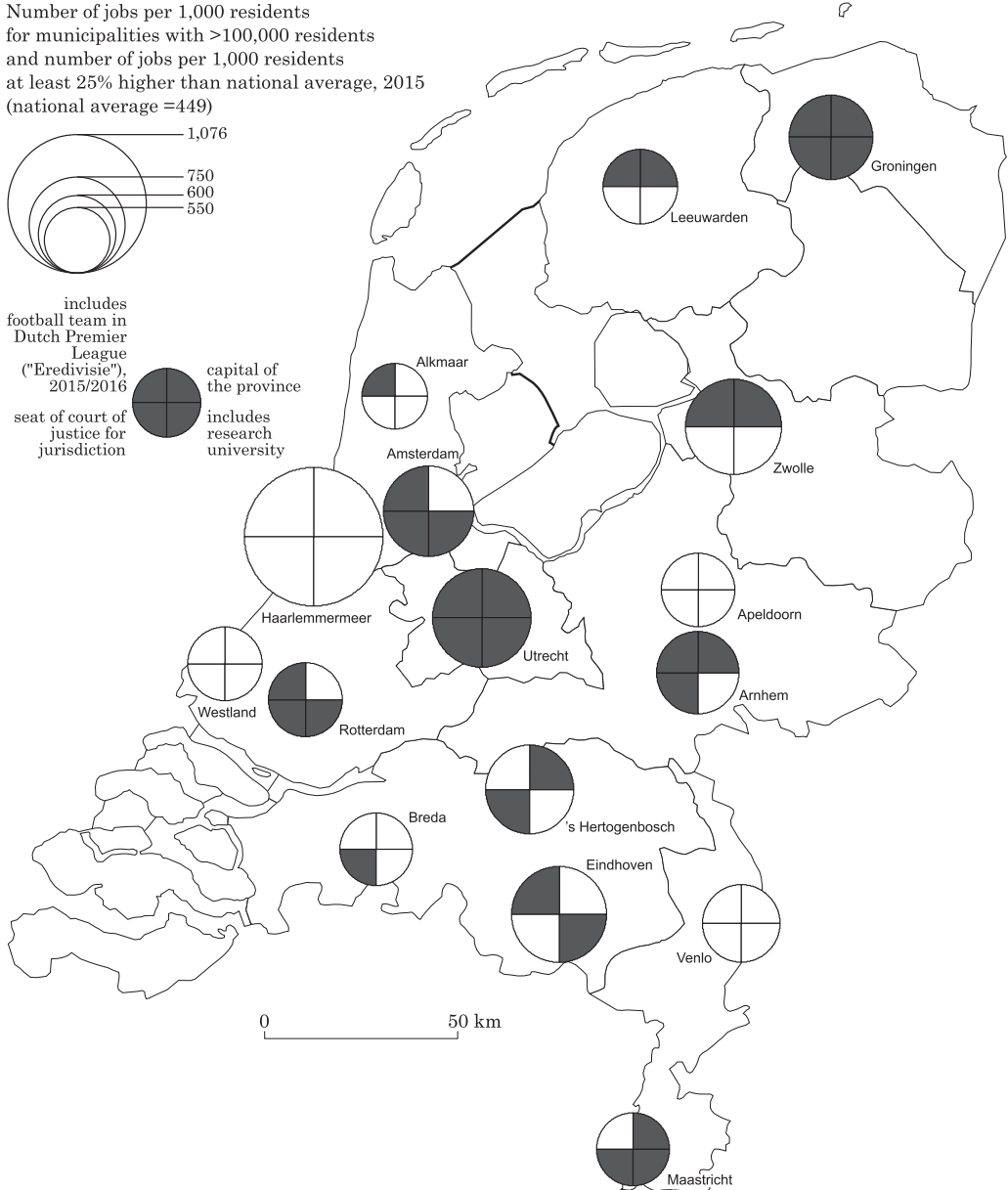
includes
 football team in
 Dutch Premier
 League
 ("Eredivisie"),
 2015/2016

seat of court of
 justice for
 jurisdiction



capital of the
 province

includes
 research
 university



Source: CBS Statline (2016)

© 2016 P.H. Pellenburg & P.J.M. van Steen & P.D. Grootte
 Faculty of Spatial Sciences; University of Groningen
Tijdschrift voor Econ. en Soc. Geografie; 107(2016)3

capital' would then seem to be misplaced. The same is true for the municipality of Westland, near Rotterdam. Westland, the national core area for greenhouse horticulture, provides jobs to many people from the surrounding larger cities, including Rotterdam and The Hague.

Municipalities that have a high score on the labour market condition, and at the same time show a positive score on 3 of the other conditions, include Amsterdam, Arnhem, Rotterdam and Maastricht. It could be argued that Amsterdam and Rotterdam should not be labelled 'regional capitals', as they are the two most populated municipalities in the Netherlands and in that sense dominate the urban hierarchy. Indeed, Amsterdam is the national capital of the country, and Rotterdam is without doubt the 'port capital' of Europe in terms of the volume of cargo processed. If we would accept this argumentation, it is interesting to observe that apart from Utrecht and Alkmaar, all other 'true regional capitals' are located outside the three Randstad Holland provinces of North Holland, South Holland and Utrecht, in the less urbanised parts of the country.

A number of cities are not included in this issue's map, because they do not meet our selection criterion of a significant above average number of jobs per 1,000 residents. Of these 'missing cases', the city of The Hague stands out. The Hague, seating the national government and several international legal institutions, is the third largest city of the Netherlands in terms of population, and shows an above average growth of population (cf. Van Steen *et al.* 2016). The city would have scored on 3 of the 4 additional criteria for being a regional capital (provincial capital, court of justice, premier league football club), but fails on the decisive criterion of being a regional job centre, with only 519 jobs per 1,000 residents.

REFLECTION

Our approach to identify regional capitals in The Netherlands shows a few unexpected outcomes.

Most of these exceptions are to be found in Randstad Holland, the densely built-up and economically well-developed Western part of the country. The Randstad, included in 1966 as one of the 'World Cities' in Peter Hall's influential book with the same title, is not one continuously built up 'city', but a polynuclear entity including many large, medium-sized and smaller cities and towns. These cities are more often than not located very close to one or more other cities, and that in itself explains why most of these cities have not developed into the economic, cultural, educational and administrative centre of a larger region. Indeed, the next urban development is never too far away. In his analysis of so-called 'new urban centres' (NUCs) in The Netherlands, Van der Heijde (2012) counts not less than 68 NUCs throughout the country, 37 of which are to be found in the urban regions of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht – including some of the exceptions mentioned above (e.g., Hoofddorp, Schiphol and Westland). The only real surprise with this issue's map is the fact that the municipality of The Hague provides a relative low number of jobs to the labour force living in other municipalities.

REFERENCES

- HALL, P. (1966), *The World Cities*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- KOOIJ, P. & P.H. PELLENBARG, eds. (1994), *Regional Capitals. Past, present, prospects*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- VAN DER HEIJDE, P. (2012), New Urban Centres in the Netherlands. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 103, pp. 362–373.
- VAN STEEN, P.J.M., P.H. PELLENBARG & P.D. GROOTE (2016), Population growth in the Netherlands. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 107, pp. 126–128.